

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH March 24, 2009

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES

The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee held a meeting on this date at 7:00 p.m. in the Metcalf Elementary School cafeteria. Members present were Susan DeSack, Chairperson; Teri Cicero, Vice Chairperson; Gregory Coutcher, Clerk; Valerie Zuercher; Mark Rafanelli, Mary Walsh, and Robert Bollengier. Superintendent Thomas J. Geismar; Director of Administration Robert V. Ross; Director of Curriculum Nancy I. Daley, and Director of Special Services Carmella Farrar were present. Student Member Katherine Matook left the meeting early at 7:30 p.m. Attorney Brad Gorham arrived at 7:38 p.m. and left the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

ORDER – Chair DeSack called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Member Zuercher read the District Mission Statement.

Open Forum (15-minute limit) – None

Recognition/Achievements – Melissa Marino – 1st Year Principal Award – Superintendent Geismar introduced Lineham/Wawaloam Principal Melissa Marino who has been selected by the Rhode Island

Association of School Principals, (RIASP) as the Outstanding First Year Principal for 2007 – 2008. Dr. Geismar listed several of Ms. Marino’s accomplishments during her first year as principal. He cited three character/ leadership qualities that he believes show Ms. Marino’s potential to have a long and successful career as a school leader – wisdom, courage and integrity. On behalf of the School Committee, Vice Chair Cicero offered congratulations and presented Ms. Marino with a School Committee Recognition Certificate and Apple Award.

Principal Marino thanked everyone and said that this award is an honor and also a reflection of the partnership that she has with Curriculum Director Nancy Daley, Special Education Director Carmella Farrar, and her wonderful faculty.

Jr. High School – NELMS Spotlight School – Dr. Geismar called Principal Mark Thompson and Assistant Principal JoAnn Basel forward and said that he is thrilled with the quality of education that EWG 7th and 8th grade students receive under the leadership of Mr. Thompson and Ms. Basel. This is the second time that the New England League of Middle Schools, (NELMS) has selected EWG Junior High to receive the Spotlight School Award. The junior high is one of only four middle schools in Rhode Island and one of only thirty middle schools in all of New England to be recognized. Dr. Geismar extended thanks for a job well done to Principal Thompson, Assistant Principal Basel, and the junior high school staff. On behalf of the

School Committee, Clerk Coutcher offered thanks and congratulations and presented them with a School Committee Recognition Certificate and Apple Award.

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Jr. High School Boys' Wrestling Team as Southern Division Co-Champions – Superintendent Geismar acknowledged the Junior High School Wrestling Team as the Southern Division Co-Champions for the 2008 – 2009 season. The team, under first year coach Dwayne LaBrie, completed its most successful season in years. Dr. Geismar recognized Coach LaBrie and expressed his opinion that you cannot have a successful team without a good coach. On behalf of the School Committee, Chair DeSack thanked Coach LaBrie and presented him with a School Committee Apple Recognition Award. Dr. Geismar called forward each team member to receive School Committee Recognition/Gift Certificate Awards.

- Mark Stevens**
- Ben Holcomb**
- Brandon Jendzejec**
- Alex Seale**
- Cole Davidson**
- Michael Dampier - 112 lb Middle School Jr. Varsity State Champion**
- Dwight Anderson - 126 lb Middle School Jr. Varsity 6th Place**

- **Robbie Campbell**
- **Kyle Williams**
- **Christian LaBrie - 105 lb Middle School Varsity State Champion**
- **Andrew LaBrie - 112 lb Middle School Varsity State Champion**
- **Justin Lake - 119 lb Middle School Varsity 6th Place**
- **Matthew Botieri**
- **Richard Satchwill - 133 lb Middle School Varsity 4th Place**
- **Gary Benedetti**
- **Carl Neff - 185 lb Middle School Varsity 4th Place**
- **Gino Neri**

Coach LaBrie reported that this is the first time in 15 years that the junior high team won the division. He said that he took eight guys to States and six of them placed and that with eight guys the team placed 8th in the State. Most of the teams at States had full brackets of 20 kids.

RI State Wrestling Champion/First Team All-State – Dr. Geismar introduced Kyle Morgan. He recognized Kyle as the sixth Rhode Island State Wrestling Champion that EWG Senior High School has had in the last seven years. Kyle is First Team All-State in the 160 pound class. In response to Dr. Geismar's inquiry regarding how he did in the 2009 New England Wrestling Championships, Kyle said that he placed as the State Champion. Superintendent Geismar expressed his opinion that wrestling is a very tough sport that requires a lot of commitment and physical courage. On behalf of the

School Committee Chair DeSack offered congratulations and presented Kyle with School Committee Recognition Award/Gift Certificates.

District Spelling Bee Champion – Dr. Geismar said that one year ago Ashley Peltier in the 7th grade was recognized as the District Spelling Bee Champion. And this year,

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Ashley Peltier in the 8th grade is being recognized as the District Spelling Bee Champion. Dr. Geismar called Ashley forward to receive School Committee Recognition Award/Gift Certificates and offered her congratulations. He referenced Ashley's performance at the Spelling Bee Competition and expressed that she did a great job and that she is a wonderful young lady.

Presentation – Student Member Report – Student Member Katherine Matook presented updates on student life at the senior high school. She informed members that the track season has officially began, Peter Pan opens tomorrow and will run through the weekend, and Advanced Placement Exams will be offered at the beginning of May. Ms. Matook described various stages of the Senior Project that are forthcoming and various fundraiser/events such as Pennies for Patients, Penney Wars, Art Department's Pasta Bar, and the Poetry Slam.

Metcalf School Presentation – Principal Louise Boyce welcomed everyone and introduced Assistant Principal Carol Fish and music teacher Stacey Place. Ms. Place thanked members for allowing the Metcalf Band to play this evening. She said that the band members present tonight represent a small selection of the 88 members of the 6th grade band. Ms. Place said that the 5th grade band has 87 members. She introduced tonight’s musical selection - Aztec Sunrise.

Upon completion of the band performance, music teacher Carrie Scheff introduced Metcalf School’s 3rd and 4th grade Chorus. She reported that the chorus fabulously represented Metcalf School in its debut performance recently at the opening of a Providence Bruins game. Metcalf’s Chorus offered its rendition of the piece they played at the Bruins game - America the Beautiful.

Ms. Fish introduced Student Council members to present Student Council accomplishments. Grade 6 Student Council members Sarah, Jennifer, Lacy, Rachel, and Amber briefly described various Student Council sponsored activities that took place throughout the school year to help out members of the EWG community.

Principal Boyce gave a brief PowerPoint presentation primarily relating to the comparison of Metcalf’s NECAP scores from this year’s to last year’s and Metcalf’s scores with statewide scores.

Student Member Matook left the meeting at this time, (7:30 p.m.).

Ms. Boyce's presentation also included Strategies and Programs to Improve Student Learning at Metcalf School.

Attorney Gorham arrived at this time, (7:38 p.m.).

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Assistant Principal Carol Fish gave a list of programs in place that address the social/emotional piece of student life at Metcalf School. Ms. Fish talked about computer tracking devices she uses for discipline, attendance, and academic probation. She also explained the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Kids Program she uses that has resulted in improved behaviors in some students. Lastly, she informed members about the Metcalf DVD, created by former EWG teacher Norm Leveillee, that is given to new students to take home for viewing to help to lower anxiety levels.

In closing, Ms. Boyce presented Metcalf School's new Mission Statement which she said aligns well with the District Mission Statement.

Dr. Geismar thanked Ms. Boyce, Ms. Fish, the students, Ms. Place, and Ms. Scheff for a wonderful job this evening. He expressed his

opinion that everyone at Metcalf School is doing a good job and he said that he is proud.

ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA- Superintendent Geismar gave an overview of the Consent Agenda.

Member Bollengier identified a minor correction for page 7 of the March 10, 2009 Regular Meeting Minutes - Chair DeSack advised that Member Bollengier's motion would need to be amended to reflect a figure of \$28,404,230. Member Bollengier pointed out that the figure \$28,404,230 should be corrected to read \$29,404,230.

A motion was made by Member Walsh and seconded by Member Bollengier to accept the Consent Agenda with the minutes amended as stated. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

The following items were approved:

**A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Minutes of March 10, 2009;
Executive Session Minutes of March 10, 2009**

B. Personnel Items

1. Appointments

2. Leaves of Absence

3. Resignations

4. Grievances

5. Recalls

6. Non-Renewals

7. Sabbaticals

C. Bills – In the amount of \$284,609.07

D. Home School Approvals

1. SPECIALE – Nikki, Mia

2. FONTAINE – Norah Henry

3. EDWARDS - Jacqueline

End Consent Agenda

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Superintendent Geismar brought attention to Correspondence (2) [enclosed in members' supplemental packets] for discussion during tonight's agenda item, Budget Discussion.

In response to Member Rafanelli's inquiry, Dr. Geismar explained that Correspondence (1) is the District's stimulus package "wish list" that was submitted to the State of Rhode Island for consideration.

Correspondence – (1) State of RI Economic Stimulus Infrastructure Project Request Form/Economic Stimulus Project Proposals; (2) DRAFT letter to Representative/Senator

Budget Discussion/Charter Discussion/Workshop – Chair DeSack advised that two motions have been submitted to amend the School Committees' already low 2009/10 budget. A budget that the School Committee has to cut \$2 million out of. The amendments are to cut

an additional \$400,000 or an additional \$640,000. Chair DeSack said that should any amendments to the budget pass, the School Committee will then be back at the table trying to find more programs that will have to be cut. She said that the School Committee will finalize the cuts at next Tuesday evening's budget meeting. Vice Chair Cicero recommended and Clerk Coutcher concurred to have building principals present at Tuesday night's meeting to engage in dialogue about the budget. Chair DeSack noted that Clerk Coutcher and Member Rafanelli have created flyers for dissemination to better inform voters about the budget situation/meeting and charter change. The committee hopes that if the one-year charter amendment passes, the additional cuts that are requested will not pass.

Chair DeSack recognized Attorney Gorham who she requested to attend tonight's meeting to answer legal questions surrounding the budget and charter amendment proposal. She informed Attorney Gorham that the committee is under the impression that state law says the school district cannot receive less funding than the previous year unless there is a substantial change in enrollment. She asked what constitutes a substantial change? And how can the school district entertain two amendments which pays less than last year? Attorney Gorham explained that the appropriating authority for the school district is the District Financial Meeting, (DFM). If the DFM wants to vote "x" amount of dollars to run the schools then that is how much is appropriated. If that amount is less than last year's amount, then the question is if they can sustain that in court. There is

a process the school district will have to go through in order to deal with a budget that is insufficient. The process is spelled out in what is called the Carullo Act. If the appropriating authority refuses to give the school district sufficient funds to run, that is the remedy that the law specifies. Attorney Gorham expressed his opinion that the whole process is awkward and not well thought out but that is the procedure that must be followed. In response to Chair DeSack's inquiry regarding the budget voting process, Attorney Gorham recommended that the first step at the DFM is to vote on the budget. After that, vote on the allocation to each town. In the end, the Chair decides how to

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conduct the DFM. Attorney Gorham and members discussed the prospect of voting on the charter change at the DFM rather than the Town Financial Meetings and the official course of action that would involve. Consensus of the committee was not to support that prospect. For the benefit of audience members present, Chair DeSack explained that the School Committee has voted to propose a charter change for one year only that would require the Towns to give the District what they gave last year. The School Committee feels that formula will be fair to all. The School Committee plans to form a committee to research long-term charter change options. Members of the School Committee, Administration, Town Council, and community shall sit on that committee. Member Zuercher requested

to point out what will happen if any of the amendments pass. She emphasized that not just the proposed .8 FTE music teacher reduction will take place but entire programs such as music and sports will be cut. Since the charter change will be voted on at the Town Financial Meetings and the school budget will be voted on at the DFM, Chair DeSack stressed how critical it is this year that taxpayers attend both meetings. She emphasized that it is very important to get the word out as it will be devastating to the district if the proposed amendments pass. Chair DeSack gave details relating to anticipated state funding and stimulus money regulations. Dr. Geismar requested to send the letter enclosed in members' supplemental packets to the District's state representatives and state senator regarding the governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2009, that if approved would result in the District losing approximately \$350,000 in anticipated state aid. Consensus of the committee was to send the letters.

NEW BUSINESS – POPS – Proposed .8 FTE Music Teacher Reduction
– President of Parents of Performing Students, (POPS) Stacy Sheehan brought concerns to the Committee regarding the .8FTE reduction to the music staff at Metcalf School. On behalf of POPS, she offered to work with the School Committee to keep the music program intact. She listed inefficiencies that will come about should the District change to an afterschool music program at Metcalf School. Parents, students, and teachers addressed the Committee to express their opinions and concerns about the importance of the

Metcalf School music program and its link to the high school program, and about the proposed cut. Chair DeSack said that the School Committee did not take any cuts lightly. The School Committee is still \$500,000 shy of making its own budget, there is much to consider, and the Committee is hopeful for concessions from the unions. The Committee is cutting extra-curricular activities, as well as custodian, teacher, clerical, and administrative staff positions. At the request of Chair DeSack, Dr. Geismar agreed to make a date to meet with music teachers/POPS prior to next Tuesday night's budget meeting. Chair DeSack stressed that if any of the amendments pass and the charter change fails, further cuts will follow. The District will no longer have teams at the junior high, and junior high sports programs and senior high sports programs will be cut. She said that this is a desperate year and appealed to audience members to contact state legislators, to get the word out to fellow taxpayers, and to come to the meetings to vote.

The Committee took a 5-minute recess at this time, (8:55 p.m.).

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The meeting reconvened and Member Bollengier left the meeting at this time, (9:00 p.m.).

Joint Labor/Management Health Care Advisory Committee Appointees – Dr. Geismar advised that the Committee needs to

appoint two members to the Joint Labor/Management Health Care Advisory Committee. He recommended appointing Administrator Robert Ross or Kate LaCroix and one School Committee member. In response to Chair DeSack's request for volunteers from the Committee, Clerk Coutcher said he would be interested in serving. Chair DeSack said that as per the charter, she will call and chair the first meeting until a chairperson is appointed.

A motion was made by Member Walsh and seconded by Member Zuercher to appoint Greg Coutcher and Robert Ross to be the Joint Labor/Management Health Care Advisory Committee members. Voted 6 – 0 in favor.

Creation of Committee to Research District Cost Savings Strategies – Superintendent Geismar informed members that he solicited cost savings ideas from district employees. Once the ideas are compiled and costed out, he will share the data with the Committee.

Member Bollengier returned to the meeting at this time, (9:03 p.m.).

A motion was made by Clerk Coutcher and seconded by Member Bollengier to appoint Vice Chair Cicero, Member Bollengier, and Member Rafanelli to the Committee to Research District Cost Savings Strategies. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Town of Exeter Request for Reimbursement – Chair DeSack pointed

out that the Town of Exeter is asking for \$937.88 - half of the cost to install a radio remote control for the emergency generator at Metcalf School. Clerk Coutcher said that when the last payment was made toward the emergency generator, his recollection is that the Committee agreed that would be the final payment.

Member Bollengier made a motion that we do not vote to approve the payment of one half of \$1,875.76 of the cost to install a radio remote control. Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero.

Discussion: Clerk Coutcher commented that the Committee made it clear that there would be no added costs considered when it made the last payment.

Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Capital Project Update – Superintendent Geismar reported that the Building Committee is in the process of approving plans for Phase II. The work is to be done this spring and summer. The next meeting is schedule for one

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week from tomorrow. Contractors will work on Metcalf 's gymnasium floor over spring break. The imperfections and finish are supposed to be fixed. Building Committee Chairperson Jim Woloohojian and

Building Committee Member Bob Butler are monitoring the floor project.

Reports/Comments – None

IMPORTANT DATES AND MEETINGS – Wednesday, March 25, 2009-Building Committee Meeting; Tuesday, March 31, 2009- Budget Workshop; Wednesday, April 1, 2009-Building Committee Meeting; Tuesday, April 14, 2009-School Committee Meeting; Monday, April 20, 2009-District Financial Meeting; Tuesday, April 28, 2009-School Committee-(Junior High Presentation)

EXECUTIVE SESSION – RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5 – Vice Chair Cicero moved to go into Executive Session at 9:15 p.m. in accordance with 42-46-5 (2) – Collective Bargaining Agreement – Negotiation Discussion. Seconded Member Bollengier. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Meeting recessed to Executive Session at 9:15 p.m.

Member Bollengier moved to reconvene to Open Session. Seconded by Member Walsh. Voted 7 – 0 in favor.

Meeting reconvened to Open Session at 9:52 p.m.

No votes were taken during Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT – Member Walsh moved to adjourn at 9:52 p.m.

Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero. Voted 7 – 0 in favor. Meeting adjourned 9:52 p.m.

**ROBIN CERIO
CLERK**